



# DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT

incorporating Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 101821**

**Thomas More Catholic School**

**Russell Hill Road**

**Purley, CR8 2XP**

**Inspection dates: 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017**

**Chair of Governors: Caroline Mushens**

**Executive Headteacher: Ruth Holden**

**Head of School : Josephine Okokon**

**Inspectors: Tom Cahill**

**Catherine Burnett**

**Publication Date 9th January 2018**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Interim Director of Education: Stephen Bryan**



### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas More Catholic School is a Voluntary Aided school situated in the Croydon Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Croydon Local Authority. The principal parishes which the school serves are St Elphege's, Wallington; St Chad, South Norwood, St Mary's, Croydon, and St Dominic's, Waddon. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is approximately 33%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education, since the last inspection, has been increased to 10 % in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in accordance with the requirements of the Bishops' Conference.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 18 years, with more boys than girls. The number of pupils currently on roll is 807, including 91 in the sixth form. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is slightly below average while the proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium (33%) is well above. A high number of the pupils receive extra support in class, while the percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is also well above average.

The school is currently working in partnership with Bonus Pastor Catholic College through an Executive Headship arrangement between the two schools.. It is also part of the local Catholic School's Teaching Alliance.

The school has also achieved the International School Award and is involved in a range of projects across several European countries.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

Thomas More Catholic School is a Good Catholic school because:

- The school provides highly effective pastoral care to all pupils in a nurturing and very inclusive community.
- The Executive Headteacher, Head of School and the extended senior leadership team provide strong Catholic leadership and have raised the aspirations and morale of all stakeholders.
- Overall, teaching of Religious Education is good and has improved since the last inspection.
- The respectful behaviour of pupils is good and contributes to the good and improving learning environment provided by the school.

### WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

- Improve outcomes for pupils in Religious Education so that pupils consistently make or exceed expected progress.

Build on the already good provision for Catholic Life by:

- i) Commencing the recruitment process for a school Chaplain
- ii) Extending the retreat provision so more pupils are able to engage with the Catholic Life of the school.

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## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

### Catholic Life

2

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. 2

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. 2

### Religious Education

2

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education. 3

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education 2

### Collective Worship

2

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship 2

The quality of provision for Collective Worship 2

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship. 2

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## CATHOLIC LIFE

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**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- Pupils are supported very well by the caring and nurturing ethos which permeates the school. Most pupils show respect for one another and are considerate. One parent wrote “Coming to this school has made them the caring young people they are.”
- Pupils enjoy school; they feel safe at the school. They told inspectors that bullying is not tolerated. If it does occur, pupils know it will be dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils learn and play together as part of a very inclusive community. Each pupil is respected whatever their background or faith.
- Pupils spoke warmly of the positive changes at the school after new leaders were appointed last year. They particularly noticed the improvement in behaviour around the school and more challenge in lessons.
- The pupils know and understand the school’s mission statement and school motto: “To learn, to care, to achieve.”
- Pupils particularly enjoy ‘Breathe Week’. During a week in Lent, the school hall is given over for a range of themed activities including: self-reflection, family and friends and “The World and Praise.” These activities all contribute to developing the moral as well as spiritual life of the pupils. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation during this week.
- Pupils who find school a challenge are well supported by staff in the Thomas More Inclusion Unit. The restorative justice approach to discipline taken by the school works well, significantly contributing to the moral development of the pupils.
- Pupils respond well to opportunities to support those in need. Over the course of each academic year, it raises significant funds for charities such as CAFOD, The British Red Cross and the Umoja Street Child charity as well as the local food bank.
- Parents and pupils value the improvements to the school’s website, that explain the Catholic ethos of the school with clarity

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- The school is distinctly Catholic. The range of religious icons and images ensures that the school environment reflects its mission.
- The recently refurbished chapel provides opportunities for prayer and reflection. Pupils said to inspectors they would like the chapel to be more accessible to them during the school day.
- Local clergy are very supportive. They celebrate Mass and visit pupils during some Religious Education lessons.



- There are policies and procedures in place to ensure there is a good provision for pastoral care.
- The school does not have any chaplaincy provision. It has been recognised as a weakness and school leaders have begun the process of appointing a school chaplain.
- The provision within “Breathe Week” makes a significant contribution to pupils’ spiritual development.
- The provision for retreats is under developed. A comprehensive programme of retreats should be established in order to further enhance the spiritual life of the pupils.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school is good.**

- The Executive Headteacher and Head of School provide strong Catholic leadership to all stakeholders. They model that commitment within the school.
- The support provided by a committed enthusiastic extended leadership team ensures parents and carers have a good understanding of the school’s mission.
- The planning of school improvement by the leadership team further enhances the Catholic Life of the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the Catholic Life of the school and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They need to review how they monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life of the school so that it is more formal and systematic.
- Thomas More is developing closer links with its local feeder schools in order to raise the profile of the school. Pupils from these schools come to the school for curriculum enrichment activities. Primary schools also have access to the swimming pool located at Thomas More.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education requires improvement**

- Pupils enjoy their Religious Education lessons and the varied styles of teaching and learning used by teachers. They particularly enjoy the opportunities to discuss topics in a safe and supportive environment.
- Outcomes in Religious Education are good and pupils clearly enjoy the challenge of the course. All pupils in the Sixth form follow the N.O.C.N course for general Religious Education.
- Outcomes at GCSE require improvement. Although there has been an upward trend in results at GCSE since the last inspection, they remain significantly below those grades achieved by pupils in English and Mathematics. This is partially due to past staffing difficulties and the use of examination courses that did not meet the needs of all the pupils. Outcomes in A Level Religious Education match the school's predictions.
- 'Philosophy for Children' has recently been introduced into Religious Education lessons and this has contributed significantly to the enjoyment of the subject for pupils.
- The behaviour and attitudes to learning shown by pupils allow them to make at least expected progress. With the continued whole school focus on improving teaching and learning, pupils are starting to make better than expected progress, which will result in rapidly improving outcomes.
- Current tracking of the progress of pupils in Year 11 predict that results should significantly improve in 2018. Evidence from lesson observations and the review of exercise books during the inspection support this prediction.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is good**

- Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved further since the previous inspection.
- In a very good lesson seen during the inspection, pupils were given excellent feedback on examination technique they should be using at GCSE to maximize their grades. The lesson had good pace with challenging questions and effective pair work. Pupils were able to demonstrate good subject knowledge and made very good progress. Pupils showed positive attitudes and enjoyed a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Lessons are generally well planned and they meet the needs of most pupils but not all. Further work on differentiation needs to be done to ensure the more able are stretched and the less able supported so they can achieve their full potential.



- The school's new marking policy is having a positive impact. Where the policy is being followed, marking is good and teachers provide feedback to pupils on how to improve further.
- Assessments are regularly carried out and the tracking of pupil progress has significantly improved since the last inspection. It is linked to the recently introduced whole school tracking system.
- The department has benefitted from support from the Religious Education Department of another Catholic school and the Diocesan Religious Education Adviser.
- The department is well resourced and classrooms have good displays which support learning.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is good**

- The subject leader's self-evaluation and quality assurance processes ensure that she knows the strengths and weaknesses of the department. She has clear plans on how to secure further improvement. A Deputy Headteacher provides a good blend of challenge and support.
- Staffing within the department has improved since the last inspection. School leaders and the subject leader have been creative in finding ways to overcome recruitment issues by "growing its own" Religious Education teachers.
- With support from senior leaders and governors, the Religious Education subject leader ensures that the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory are met at all key stages. The school has chosen to follow the A.Q.A Syllabus B specification for GCSE which meets the Archbishop's directive.
- There is a link governor who ensures accurate communication between the department and the Governing Body.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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### **How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good**

- Pupils respond positively and respectfully during prayers and Collective Worship. In Year group assemblies seen during the inspection, pupils were fully engaged and responded in a mature and respectful manner. Pupils read the parable of the five talents and teachers linked it skilfully to the talents of young people using appropriate media.
- Prayer is a central feature of the school with prayers at the start and the end of the day for all pupils. Many lessons also begin with a prayer. A prayer club for both pupils and staff is offered on a weekly basis
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to the opportunities provided to experience a variety of prayer styles during the annual "Breathe Week."
- Pupils are given the opportunity to celebrate Mass throughout the school year with an emphasis on feast days and days of liturgical significance.

### **The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- The Liturgy Coordinator has established a comprehensive programme of liturgical celebrations fully supported by the local clergy. Good planning ensures these are of good quality and meet the needs of all pupils.
- Year group assemblies are well planned and include time for silent reflection. They are often linked to the Gospel reading from the previous Sunday Mass and make good use of resources which ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.
- Prayers are always said in form groups at the start of the day and tutors are provided with appropriate resources and training.

### **How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- Leaders and governors ensure a wide range of opportunities exist for pupils to participate in Collective Worship and prayer. A detailed liturgical calendar ensures key liturgical events are celebrated during the year and that priests are available where appropriate.
- Leaders attend assemblies and other forms of Collective Worship to monitor and evaluate their impact. Governors are also invited to attend major liturgical celebrations.